

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

B¹

1. (Twice Amended) A method for forming a crystalline silicon nitride layer, comprising the steps of:

- providing a crystalline silicon substrate with an exposed precleaned surface;
- removing a native oxide from the exposed surface;
- precleaning the exposed surface by employing a hydrogen prebake after an amount of time has elapsed after the removing step; and
- exposing the exposed surface to nitrogen to grow a continuous crystalline silicon nitride layer.

B²

10. (Twice Amended) A method for forming a node dielectric layer in deep trenches, comprising the steps of:

- providing a crystalline silicon substrate with trenches formed therein, the trenches including exposed silicon surfaces;
- removing a native oxide from the exposed silicon surfaces;
- precleaning the exposed surfaces by employing hydrogen prebake after an amount of time has elapsed after the removing step;
- exposing the exposed surfaces to ammonia to grow a continuous crystalline silicon nitride layer;
- depositing an amorphous silicon nitride layer over the continuous crystalline silicon nitride layer; and